

Tilghman, Maryland 21671

July 11, 1974

Dear Joe,

I was pleased and excited by your letter, and the letter from Elliott Anderson enclosed with it, and while I keep thinking that thoughts of publication inhibit my writing, the truth is that my response was to rush to the refrigerator & eat unthinkingly, and later to work out or work through for the first time a story called The Children. Publication of "Desire" would probably encourage me and also put me in a position in relation to writing and publishing that it would then be tedious if not hypocritical to pretend did not exist. That is, I would have to admit that I am writing and publishing and look at the responsibilities that entails.

Since Eliot Anderson writes, "I'd like to make room for it in the next fiction issue" then I'll assume that that is what he would like to do and see what happens. I need to think some more, and am probably going to Washington, D.C. tomorrow, & can write him when I return. Anderson's interpretations made me realize that one of my larger themes, or maybe it's a tone, or an impulse, is somber disdain. I realized after reading his letter, and then writing The Children, in which I held back from having them know and use set theory and diluted the mathematical points I needed about infinity, that I don't (yet) (but keep it up, Elliott, keep it up) have the courage to make the stories as sober and remote as I want them to be, that I am making some concession to what--is it to communication?--out of fear of what?--perhaps that standoffishness you described in me, and then I

realized that sobriety and remoteness are among the qualities I intend to communicate, and that the meaning of the stories is obvious so that the style can be aloof and remote, and then since style implies meaning, the meaning of the obviousness becomes clear as the occasion of a style that can engender its own meanings of the pathos and courage of disdain, and then the meaning of the obviousness of the first meanings, that get in the reader's way, is obvious. [I like "desire" but I really can't invent a theory of evolution more than two or three times a year; I'm working on another one now, and have the theory (with Fibonacci numbers, and neoteny appearing in human evolution) but I don't have tone, narrator, or any situation; nor, in truth, do the Fibonacci numbers have anything to do with the evolution, but maybe they will before I finish: Fibonacci's name means "son of good fortune" so maybe I'll be lucky.] When Anderson writes about "more pieces like this one" I get a sticky feeling, because Motherhood, Fatherhood, Marriage, Criticism, Kapitalismus aren't like "desire," certainly not in quality, and the stories I'm working on--Men, Women, *Illusion*, The Children, Crazy, Artist--are very insecure. Joe I think it takes all my nerve to write and that I don't have the nerves for the rest of the process. There, that's my self-depreciation allowance for this week. Or for today at least. With Kant ~~it~~ it helps to read Kemp Smith (that's me in role of helpful friend, which is easier than some other roles).

Change,

I came to Tilghman on Tuesday night, after getting the kids off with obvious frustrations and confusions and incompletions, Sunday night I saw (with John Willenbecher) Chabrol's Wedding in Blood, which sets-up the characters too farcically for the point to be convincing, Monday night I had a clear and pleasant conversation with Ralph Humphrey, and (so) when my car registration arrived Tuesday morning, I organized and left that evening. Then I slept off and on for three days, meanwhile reading Flaubert in Egypt (shall I mail you John's copy which he doesn't need back?) and then Madame Bovary, which I hadn't read since college (of course the scene with the operation on the clubfoot I remembered vaguely, but it had new meanings for me). Then I've been reading, and organizing a desk, and started/^{day before}yesterday, when my brain felt ready, to read over what I have previously written on Apollo, and I see that much of it is pretty good, but all too rambling, and I have no order for the whole, ^{but have} some new ideas which I am being careful to note. I must go to Washington because I feel some strong call to do so, and I am taking as my motto If not now, when? and There's no time like the present, and trying to follow my impulses, so if it occurs to me to write a postcard, I'm trying not to postpone it but to do it right away, or sit on the porch, or read a chapter of a book: I tire myself by fighting me about so many small details, so I'm trying to flow with myself a little better. I'd have put down Zen & the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance if I really were doing what I want to do, and read Karl Popper on evolution, but I finished it as

a duty, and got some good out of it. My response to a book on that level is not, how much better I could do, but why bother when stuff this badly thought out gets published.

p. 188
He knows nothing about science, technology, or art, as far as I can see. My favorite sentence (maybe) begins, "He literally had to move heaven and earth to arrive at this systematic understanding..." He thinks like a rugged individualist in areas which require friendly cooperation--he doesn't learn from people or from books. Anyway a third-rate mind who gets off some touching scenes, but the resemblances between landscape or landshape and mental and emotional landscapes is too easy, one-to-one correlation, fog on the mountain, light broke in the valley, etc. Anyway I'm feeling good that less than two weeks have been taken up recuperating from New York ("The romance of the precise is not the elision/ Of the tired Romance of imprecision"), getting settled, losing 8 or so pounds, and reading much, writing some. There's nowhere I'd rather be right now, but I need the Air and Space Museum and new postcards, so I'll probably trip off to Washington tomorrow.

Thanks for your kind offices with Elliott Anderson.

Bill